

Circ.: m. 203,011
 \$. 213,568

Front Page Edit Page Other Page

Date: MAY 5 1961

INVASION

The 'Foul-ups' In Information

THE PROCESS of "agonizing appraisal" of the invasion has produced one of the greatest information fouls in Washington history, and there have been some dandies—all because the Kennedy administration became allergic to direct quotation. Plenty of officials were willing to talk, but none wanted to be named.

Day after day, according to an analysis by Associated Press editors, Washington reporters had to rely on a shadowy "high official" or "authoritative source." The contradictions over the CIA's role characterized the mix-up. One source said faulty intelligence from the CIA had caused the invasion's defeat; later, another said CIA did just fine but some other branch of the government fell down.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY pulled the trigger for the talkers when he told his April 21 news conference, "I wouldn't be surprised if information is poured into you in regard to all of the recent activities."

The pouring started right away. Before nightfall, a number of administration people—all talking anonymously—had told newsmen (1) the President shouldered responsibility for all that had happened; (2) the CIA had fostered the invasion plan and Kennedy had approved it over objections of Secretary Rusk, Undersecretary Bowles and the Joint Chiefs of Staff; (3) there were no major differences among this group; (4) a Guatemala deadline for Cuban rebel trainees to leave the country had impelled a ready-or-not move. The Kennedy administration, this information said, had not given a go-ahead but had not opposed the jump-off.

MORE POURING. On April 22 still another source said former President Eisenhower had encouraged Kennedy to go ahead. This same individual said CIA information about Castro's strength and the possibility of revolt within Cuba was faulty. Andrew Hatcher, an assistant press secretary, denied Eisenhower's role, didn't deny the CIA fall-down.

On April 24 a high administration man, speaking to newspaper editors under anonymity, also said CIA had miscalculated.

One day later, another key man, also under anonymity, said CIA was accurate all the way but the invasion failed because it wasn't properly sustained. (The Detroit Free Press named the source of that story as Allen Dulles, head of the CIA.) Some reporters thought the speaker meant that the Navy had failed to do the sustaining, but he said he wouldn't try to blame anyone.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY, speaking at New York on April 27 about the broad problems of the Communist challenge, saw two requirements "that may seem almost contradictory"—the need for greater public information and the need for greater official secrecy.

He suggested some form of voluntary self-censorship by the press. But no action by the press could avert such confusion as prevailed in Washington this week, and most newspaper spokesmen stressed the necessity of some kind of guidance or ground rules being established by top government as a primary means of determining what is or isn't—in the "national interest"—desirable to publish.